

FLEETWAY  
LIBRARY

**WAR**  
**PICTURE**  
**LIBRARY**  
No 35  
**1/-**

# **FULL STEAM**





# ***FULL STEAM***

IN THE FIRST WINTER OF THE WAR, WHEN BRITISH WARSHIPS WERE ALREADY IN ACTION AGAINST THE ENEMY OVER HALF THE GLOBE, THOUGH THE LAND ARMIES STILL WATCHED EACH OTHER WARILY ON THE WESTERN FRONT, A YOUNG MAN JOINED THE ROYAL NAVY.



**ALSO ON SALE NOW**  
**FOR WAR THRILLS ... ACTION ... DRAMA ...**

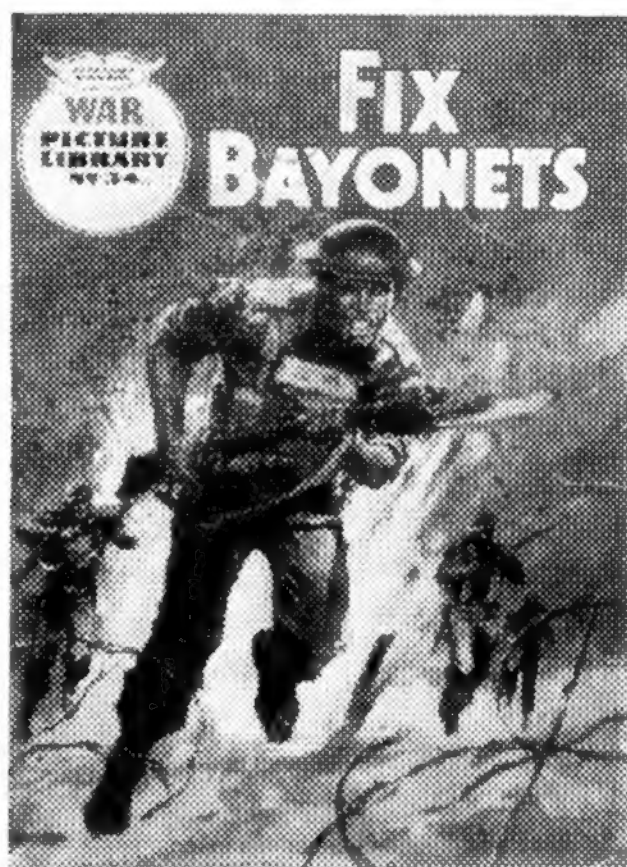
# **WAR PICTURE LIBRARY**

**No. 33—UNDER FIRE**



Who can say what happens to a man who has already forced his body and courage beyond their last limits... and then lives through an unbelievable nightmare of violence? Something breaks...

**No. 34—FIX BAYONETS**



A minute to go... sixty seconds to eternity. Then the order came, "Fix Bayonets," and an ominous click rang along the whole front. The faint glitter of moonlight shone from cold steel...

**NEXT MONTH** there will be **FOUR WAR PICTURE LIBRARIES**, on sale Monday, February 1st. They are:—

**No. 36—LONE COMMANDO**

**No. 38—DESERT PATROL**

**No. 37—FIRE ONE**

**No. 39—BOMB ALLEY**

## Chapter 1. FIRST SHIP

LARRY WILLIS, IMPATIENT WITH THE DULL ROUTINE OF A SOLICITOR'S OFFICE IN BLACKED-OUT LONDON, HAD VOLUNTEERED TO FIGHT. AND AS HE MARCHED INTO THE NAVAL TRAINING CAMP ON THE EAST COAST THAT DAY IN FEBRUARY, 1940, THE WHITE ENSIGN CAUGHT HIS EYE AND HIS HEART.

YOU THERE!  
GET FELL IN WITH  
THE REST! YOU'RE  
IN THE NAVY  
NOW!



THAT NOBLE FLAG HAD LED A HOST OF BRAVE MEN INTO BATTLE DOWN THE AGES. IT SPARKED THE IMAGINATION OF LARRY WILLIS. AND EVEN AS THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER'S RAUCOUS VOICE LASHED HIM BACK TO THE RANKS, HE HAD ACCEPTED ITS BOLD CHALLENGE.

FROM NOW ON YOU'RE PART OF A TEAM,  
MEN. THE SUCCESS OF THE ROYAL NAVY  
DEPENDS ON EVERY ONE OF YOU.  
REMEMBER THAT, WHATEVER  
THE NAVY ASKS OF YOU!





HE WOULD TRAIN HARDER AND FIGHT MORE FIERCELY THAN ANY OTHER SAILOR IN THE ROYAL NAVY! THAT WAS THE RESOLUTION LARRY WILLIS MADE DURING THOSE FIRST DAYS IN THE SENIOR SERVICE.

ALL THE NAVY'S ASKED OF US SO FAR IS DARNED SQUARE BASHING! GIVE US A HAND WITH THIS COLLAR, LARRY! I CAN'T GET THE HANG OF IT.

THERE'S NOTHING TO IT, JOE!



LARRY HAD LISTENED DUTIFULLY TO THE COMMANDER'S TALK, BUT IT HAD MADE LITTLE IMPRESSION ON HIM. HE MIGHT BE PART OF A TEAM, BUT HE WOULD BE THE BEST MAN IN IT.

YOU WATCH WILLIS, MEN! THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT!



# Full Steam

AND SO, AS THE WEEKS OF HARD TRAINING PASSED, THE QUICK, INTELLIGENT AND DEDICATED LARRY WILLIS BECAME THE LEADER OF HIS CLASS.

HOLD YOUR HEADS UP, YOU CLUMSY OAFS!  
PUT SOME BEEF INTO IT! IF YOU CAN'T  
UNDERSTAND THE KING'S ENGLISH,  
TAKE YOUR TIME FROM WILLIS!



ON THE SQUARE, IN THE GYMNASIUM, ON THE GUNNERY RANGE, ORDINARY SEAMAN LARRY WILLIS WAS THE SHINING EXAMPLE THE INSTRUCTORS HELD UP TO HIS STRUGGLING CLASSMATES.

ALL RIGHT, MEN!  
IF WILLIS CAN DO IT  
SO CAN YOU!



BUT LARRY WAS NOT UNPOPULAR. JOE AND THE OTHERS ACCEPTED HIS SUPERIORITY WITH A GRIN AND ONLY MILDLY PULLED HIS LEG. ONE DAY, TOWARDS THE END OF THEIR TRAINING...

YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT THE NAVY TAPED, DON'T YOU, LARRY BOY?

ONLY A FOOL WOULD THINK THAT, JOE! AND I'M NO FOOL!

JOE'S REMARK HAD BEEN LAZY AND IRONIC. BUT LARRY WILLIS ANSWERED IT WITH THE COOL SERIOUSNESS HE BROUGHT TO EVERYTHING HE DID.

THIS TRAINING IS KID'S STUFF! WHEN I GET OUT THERE IN THE FIGHTING, THEN I'LL SHOW THEM!

LARRY WAS NOT OVER-CONCEITED, HE WAS JUST VERY SURE OF HIMSELF. THE BIG TEST HAD NOT YET COME... BUT WHEN IT DID HE WOULD BE READY FOR IT.

YOU GO TO THE DEPOT NOW, MEN, BEFORE JOINING YOUR SHIPS! GOOD LUCK TO YOU! FROM NOW ON YOU'RE PART OF THE NAVY TEAM!





## Full Steam

FULLY-FLEDGED ORDINARY SEAMEN OF THE ROYAL NAVY, THE SQUAD MARCHED OUT ON ITS WAY TO THE DEPOT AND THE SEA. AND ONCE MORE LARRY WILLIS LOOKED UP AT THE WHITE ENSIGN.



FOR TWO IMPATIENT WEEKS, THE NEWLY-TRAINED SEAMEN WAITED FOR THEIR POSTINGS AT CHATHAM BARRACKS. AT LAST THE FATEFUL NOTICE WAS PINNED UP.





FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, LARRY FELT A BITTER ENVY OF JOE'S GOOD LUCK IN GETTING A POSTING TO THE FAMOUS AIRCRAFT CARRIER. THEN HE SET HIS JAW AND WENT IN SEARCH OF INFORMATION.



THE LALEHAM MIGHT BE A SMALL AND BATTERED SHIP OF FIRST WORLD WAR VINTAGE, BUT LARRY WILLIS WOULD SHOW THEM WHAT HE COULD DO IN HER AS WELL AS IN AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER.

BAD LUCK, LARRY BOY! YOU DESERVED SOMETHING BETTER THAN A MINESWEEPER!

WELL, SHE'S IN THE THICK OF IT NOW... AND THAT'S WHERE I WANT TO BE!



IN THOSE LAST FATEFUL DAYS OF MAY 1940 AS LARRY WILLIS READ HIS NEWSPAPER IN A DOVER BOUND TRAIN, A BRITISH ARMY WAS FIGHTING ITS WAY BACK TO THE FRENCH COAST IN THE TEETH OF FIERCE OPPOSITION FROM THE BRUTAL NAZI PANZER DIVISIONS.



AMONG THE FLEET OF TINY SHIPS WHICH HAD SAILED INTO THE INFERNO OF BOMBS AND SHELLS TO RESCUE THAT BEATEN ARMY WAS H.M.S. LALEHAM. AT DOVER LARRY WILLIS SET OUT TO FIND IT.





BUT THE CHANNEL PORT WAS A CONFUSION OF BATTERED SHIPS AND WEARY MEN. THE GREAT PICK-UP WAS AT ITS HEIGHT. ACROSS THE NARROW SEAS, AN EXHAUSTED ARMY WAS BEING FERRIED TO FREEDOM.



AFTER SIX HOURS OF LONELY SEARCHING, LARRY WILLIS FOUND A VETERAN NAVAL OFFICER. GUIDED BY HIM...HE REACHED THE NORTH JETTY JUST IN TIME.



THERE'S YOUR SHIP, LAD! LOOKS AS THOUGH SHE'S STOPPED A PACKET ON THIS TRIP. BUT IF I KNOW THE CAPTAIN, SHE'LL BE SAILING BACK TO DUNKIRK ON THE TIDE!

SO THAT'S H.M.S. LALEHAM! OH WELL, HERE GOES!

SMALL, DIRTY AND UNHEROIC, THE OLD MINESWEEPER NUGGED INTO THE QUAY AND BEGAN TO DISCHARGE ITS LOAD OF WEARY INFANTRYMEN. LARRY WILLIS LOOKED UP AT HER WITH BEATING HEART.



HALLO THERE, MATE! ARE YOU FROSTY'S RELIEF? TOM, GIVE HIM A HAND WITH HIS KIT!

RIGHTO, LOFTY!





## Full Steam

A MUG OF SWEETENED TEA IN HIS HAND, LARRY SAT ALONE AND LISTENED TO THE GOSSIP OF HIS NEW SHIPMATES. BEHIND THE ROUGH JOKES, HE SENSED THE ORDEAL BY FIRE THESE MEN HAD SO RECENTLY UNDERGONE.

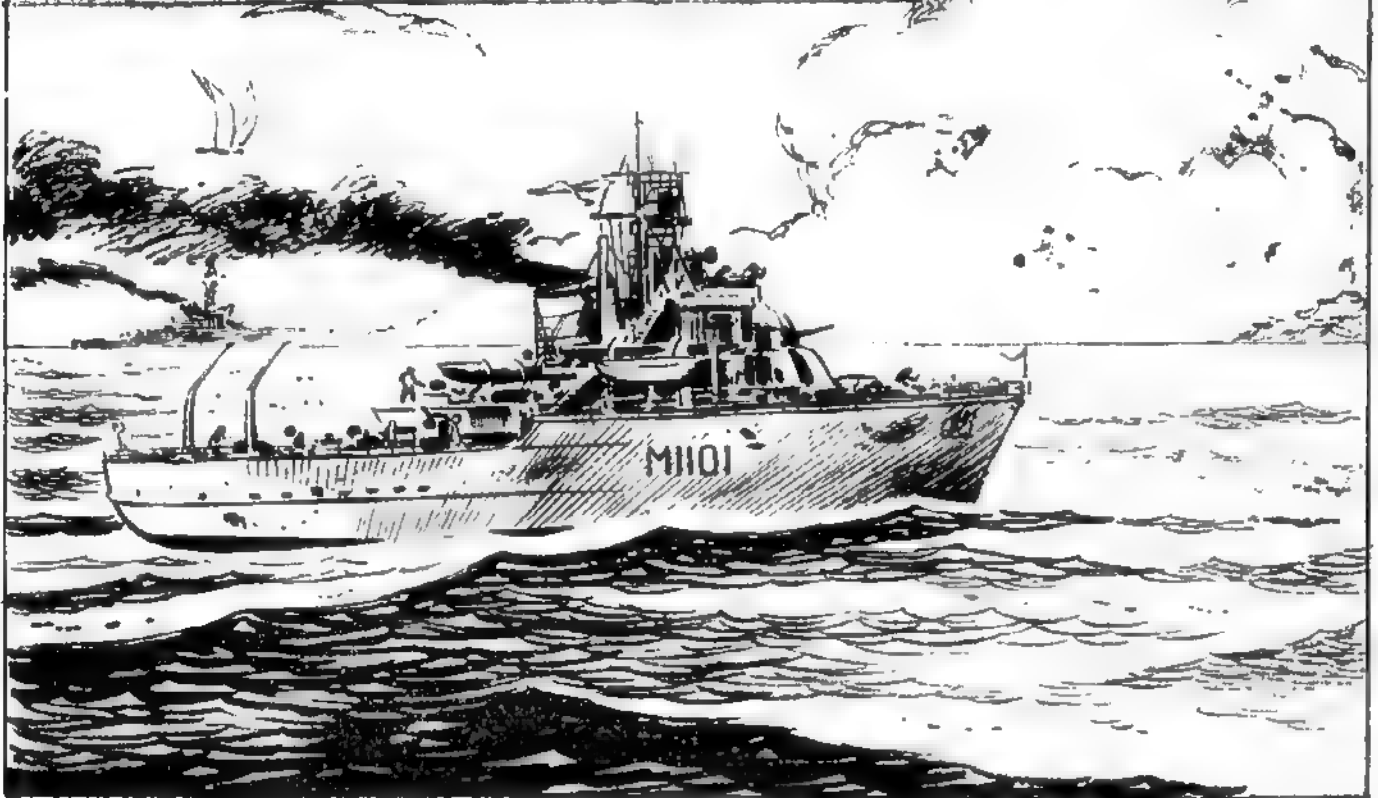


SOON THE DUTY WATCH TROOPED ON DECK TO MAKE THE SHIP READY FOR SEA AGAIN. TO LARRY'S DISGUST, THE LEADING SEAMAN ORDERED HIM TO STAY BELOW. BUT WHEN THE THROB OF THE ENGINES SHOOK THE DECK...





LARRY SLIPPED QUIETLY ON DECK AS THE *LALEHAM* EDGED OUT OF THE CROWDED HARBOUR. SOON THE BATTERED OLD MINESWEEPER WAS GATHERING SPEED ON THE RETURN JOURNEY INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.



THE DUTY WATCH WAS BATTENING DOWN FOR SEA ON THE FORWARD DECK WHEN LARRY WILLIS FOUND THEM. THE LEADING SEAMAN LOOKED UP AT HIM WITH A GRUNT OF ANNOYANCE.



LARRY WILLIS WAS NOT GOING TO ADMIT TO THE UNEASINESS IN THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH AS THE *LALEHAM* ROSE TO THE SWELL OF THE OPEN SEA. HE WAS AS GOOD AS THE NEXT MAN ... IF NOT BETTER!

FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD OF A CHAP ASKING FOR WORK IN THE NAVY!



WELL, THIS MAY BE MY FIRST TRIP. BUT THEY'RE NOT TREATING ME LIKE A PASSENGER!

THE EASY AND LIKEABLE TOM MEADOWS GRINNED WITH AMUSEMENT AT HIS NEW SHIPMATE. LARRY WAS A TYPE HE HAD NOT MET BEFORE.

PROPER BALL OF FIRE, AREN'T YOU, LARRY?



GO TO THE BRIDGE AND RELIEVE TOSH, WILLIS! AND YOU, TOM, GET WEAVING! YOU MAY BE A C.W. BUT YOU'RE GOING TO WORK WHILE YOU'RE IN MY WATCH.

SO TOM MEADOWS WAS COMMISSION WORTHY CADET. THE FACT LODGED ITSELF IN LARRY'S QUICK MIND BUT HE HAD NO TIME TO REFLECT ON IT NOW. EVEN AS HE REACHED THE BRIDGE...

PLENTY OF AIR ACTIVITY OVER THE BEACHES, SIR!

CLOSE UP TO ACTION STATIONS HERE WE GO AGAIN, MEN!





## Chapter 2. COLLISION COURSE

H.M.S. LALEHAM STEAMED UNFLINCHINGLY TOWARDS THE INFERNO THAT WAS DUNKIRK. UNDER A SKY LIVID WITH THE SMOKE OF BURNING SHIPS, HISTORY WAS BEING MADE. AN ARMADA OF LITTLE SHIPS WAS SAVING AN ARMY FROM DESTRUCTION.



AS THE OLD MINESWEEPER NEARED THE BLAZING FRENCH COAST, A DESTROYER RANGED ALONGSIDE. THE LOUD HAILER BLARED A TERSE ORDER.



THE LALEHAM ALTERED COURSE TO STARBOARD AND SWUNG IN TOWARDS THE HARBOUR. WEARY TROOPS, CRAMMED TO THE RAILS OF A CHANNEL STEAMER, WAVED A HEARTFELT GREETING TO THE BATTERED BUT TENACIOUS LITTLE WARSHIP.



ON THE BRIDGE OF THE *LALEHAM*, LARRY WILLIS LISTENED TO THE SWIFT ORDERS OF THE CAPTAIN AND ENVIED HIM HIS COOL COMMAND OF A PERILOUS SITUATION. THE JETTY SWUNG NEARER.



THE MEN ON THE JETTY RAISED A RAGGED CHEER AS THE OLD MINESWEEPER CAME ALONGSIDE.





WEARY AND HUNGRY, BUT STILL DISCIPLINED IN DEFEAT, THE INFANTRYMEN BEGAN TO CLIMB THE GANGWAY TO THE LALEHAM'S DECK. THE NAVY WAS HERE...



THE FIRST LIEUTENANT ANSWERED LARRY ROUGHLY. HE HAD NO SYMPATHY WITH RATINGS WHO WANTED TO STEP OUTSIDE THEIR SPHERE OF DUTY.



AND NOW THE BRIDGE OF THE MINESWEEPER BECAME THE CENTRE OF ACTIVITY AS THE LAST TROOPS HOBBOLED ABOARD AND THE ENGINES THROBBED INTO LIFE.



WAVES OF GERMAN BOMBERS HAD LASHED THE BEACHES OF DUNKIRK WITH HIGH EXPLOSIVE SINCE THE GREAT EVACUATION HAD BEGUN. NOW A NEW ATTACK WAS DEVELOPING.

WE ATTACK THE FIRST WARSHIP!  
BOMB DOORS OPEN!



THE OLD MINESWEEPER, HEAVILY LADEN WITH TROOPS, SEEMED AN EASY TARGET TO THE GLOATING NAZI PILOT. BUT THE SMALL AND BATTERED SHIP STILL HAD A STING LEFT IN ITS TAIL.





BRACKETED BY THE SHELLS FROM THE *LALEHAM*'S POM-POMS, THE JUNKERS SWEEP OVER THE MINESWEEPER. FROM THE STERN IN A POINT BLANK BOMBING RUN. ON THE DECK THEY SAW THE BOMB DOORS GAPE...



BUT EVEN AS THE DEADLY BOMBS LEFT THE RACK, THE HELMSMAN LEAPED TO THE CAPTAIN'S COOLLY-GIVEN ORDER, AND THE *LALEHAM* LURCHED HEAVILY TO STARBOARD.



THE STICK OF BOMBS MISSED THEIR TARGET BY INCHES. AND EVEN AS THE SHOCK OF THEIR EXPLOSION SWEEPED THE LALEHAM'S BRIDGE, A LOOKOUT BELLOWED EXULTANTLY.



THE CAPTAIN WAS ALREADY DEALING CALMLY WITH A NEW EMERGENCY. HE COULD GET NO ANSWER FROM THE WHEELHOUSE AND THE SHIP WAS STILL TURNING SHARPLY TO STARBOARD, RIGHT IN THE PATH OF A CARGO SHIP.



IT WAS LARRY WILLIS THE CAPTAIN HAD FLUNG HIS ORDER TO. KEYED UP BY THE DANGER AND HIS SUDDEN RESPONSIBILITY, THE RAW YOUNG ORDINARY SEAMAN THREW HIMSELF DOWN THE BRIDGE LADDER AND PUSHED OPEN THE DOOR OF THE WHEELHOUSE.



A HAIL OF BOMB SPLINTERS HAD FLAIED ACROSS THE WHEELHOUSE, CUTTING DOWN THE HELMSMAN LIKE A GIANT SCYTHE. ONLY FOR ONE APPALLED MOMENT, LARRY WILLIS PAUSED. THEN HE LEAPT TO THE WHEEL.





DEAF TO THE URGENT VOICE IN THE TUBE ABOVE HIS HEAD, GLORYING IN HIS MOMENT OF ABSOLUTE POWER, LARRY WILLIS STRUGGLED TO DRAG THE THRASHING MINESWEEPER FROM HER SUICIDAL PATH.



IN THAT MOMENT, LARRY HAD THE FATE OF A SHIP AND ITS HUMAN CARGO IN HIS HANDS. AND HE WAS UNWILLING TO SHARE HIS SUCCESS WITH ANYONE...



LARRY! WHAT THE DEVIL?

I CAN HANDLE THIS!

4

## NEW ISSUES OF WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 36 LONE COMMANDO

No. 37 FIRE ONE

No. 38 DESERT PATROL

No. 39 BOMB ALLEY

ON SALE MONDAY 1st FEBRUARY



THE LALEHAM'S BOWS SWUNG ROUND WITH AGONISING SLOWNESS UNDER THAT CLIFF OF IRON. ON THE BRIDGE OF THE MINE-SWEEPER, MEN HELD THEIR BREATH AND PRAYED...

GET DOWN TO THE WHEELHOUSE, NUMBER ONE! FIND OUT WHY THEY'RE NOT ANSWERING!

WE'RE GOING TO MISS HER, SIR.

THE DANGER HAD BEEN AVERTED. WITH AN INCH OF RUST TO SPARE, THE LALEHAM SWUNG CLEAR OF THE CARGO SHIP.



IT'S YOU, BO'SUN'S MATE, COX'N, TAKE OVER THE WHEEL.

AYE AYE, SIR!

BRISKLY THE COXSWAIN TOOK THE WHEEL AND ACKNOWLEDGED THE BRIDGE. SUDDENLY UNSTEADY AT THE KNEES, LARRY WILLIS FACED THE FIRST LIEUTENANT.

WHEELHOUSE HERE, SIR. EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL!

WILLIS IS YOUR NAME, IS IT? WELL, YOU SAVED THE LALEHAM, WILLIS, BUT YOU CAUSED A PANIC ON THE BRIDGE, COME WITH ME.



THE YOUNG ORDINARY SEAMAN HAD SAVED THE LALEHAM FROM DISASTER. HE KNEW IT, AND THE OFFICERS WHO QUESTIONED HIM KNEW IT. THERE WAS A TWINKLE IN THE CAPTAIN'S STERN EYES WHICH REASSURED LARRY WILLIS.



WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER THE BRIDGE, WILLIS?

I-I HADN'T TIME, SIR. AND I THOUGHT I COULD HANDLE THE SITUATION.

LARRY BARELY LISTENED TO THE CAPTAIN'S QUIET ADVICE. HIS SPIRITS WERE SOARING. HE HAD SHOWN THEM! SINGLE-HANDED HE HAD TAKEN CHARGE IN AN EMERGENCY, AND HE HAD COME OUT WITH FLYING COLOURS.

YOU HANDLED IT VERY WELL, WILLIS! IN FACT, YOU SAVED MY SHIP! BUT IN FUTURE, REMEMBER THAT YOU CAN'T SAIL A SHIP SINGLEHANDED! THAT'S WHAT WE CARRY A CREW FOR!

AYE AYE, SIR!



WALKING ON AIR, ORDINARY SEAMAN WILLIS LEFT THE BRIDGE. AND BEHIND HIM, THE CAPTAIN AND HIS SECOND IN COMMAND EXPRESSED SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEWS OF HIS CHARACTER.

YOUNG CUB! STILL, HE SHOWED KEEN INITIATIVE! WELL, LET'S CON THIS FLOATING HOTEL BACK TO DOVER.

AYE AYE, SIR... IF YOU THINK WE CAN DO IT WITHOUT YOUNG WILLIS' HELP!





THE FIRST LIEUTENANT THOUGHT WILLIS CONCEITED. HE WAS WRONG. IT WAS SIMPLY THAT LARRY WAS DETERMINED TO PROVE HIMSELF THE BEST SEAMAN IN THE ROYAL NAVY: HE BORE THE CHAFING IN THE MESS THAT NIGHT WITH PERFECT GOOD-HUMOUR.



THE KILLICK'S REMARK SET LARRY THINKING. ALL THE WAY BACK ACROSS THE CHANNEL HE TURNED A NEW AND EXCITING IDEA OVER IN HIS MIND AND WHEN THE LALEHAM REACHED DOVER AGAIN, HE PUT A QUESTION TO TOM MEADOWS.



THE DUNKIRK EPIC WAS OVER AFTER THAT LAST TRIP TO HELL AND BACK. THE *LALEHAM* RETURNED TO HER MORE HUMDRUM CONVOY AND SWEEPING DUTIES OFF THE EAST COAST. AND IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, LARRY CAME TO A DECISION.



ONE MORNING IN HARBOUR AFTER DIVISIONS, THE FIRST LIEUTENANT PASSED LARRY'S REQUEST DOUBTFULLY TO THE CAPTAIN...



LARRY WILLIS CERTAINLY THOUGHT HE WAS OFFICER MATERIAL. IF TOM MEADOWS COULD BECOME AN OFFICER, WHY SHOULDN'T HE? HAD TOM SAVED THE LALEHAM AT DUNKIRK? LARRY WAITED CONFIDENTLY AS THE WEEKS PASSED...



HIS HEART BEATING, DESPITE HIMSELF, THE YOUNG ORDINARY SEAMAN MADE HIS WAY TO THE FIRST LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE.

THE ADMIRALTY HAVE APPROVED YOUR RECOMMENDATION, WILLIS. YOU LEAVE TO JOIN THE KING ALFRED IN THREE WEEKS TIME, WITH ORDINARY SEAMAN MEADOWS.

AYE, AYE, SIR. AND THANK YOU, SIR!



JUBILANTLY, LARRY RAN BACK ALONG THE DECK TO THE SWEEPING PARTY IN THE STERN. TOM TURNED AS HE APPROACHED AND ASKED AN AWKWARD QUESTION.

STAND BY FOR A SHOCK, TOM! I'M BEING POSTED TO K.A. WITH YOU!

THE DEVIL YOU ARE, LARRY! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU WERE 'PUTTING IN' FOR AN OFFICER'S 'COURSE'?





IT WAS PRIDE WHICH HAD STAYED LARRY'S TONGUE. A SILLY PRIDE, PERHAPS, BUT WHAT DID IT MATTER NOW?

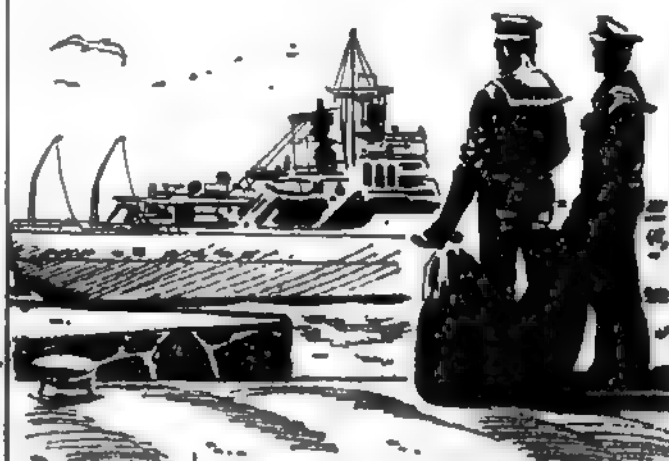
I SUPPOSE I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW I'D TRIED IN CASE THEY DIDN'T APPROVE MY RECOMMENDATION! ANYWAY, WE'RE LEAVING IN THREE WEEKS' TIME!



THE LAST SLOW WEEKS PASSED. WHEN *H.M.S. LALEHAM* PUT INTO PARKESTON QUAY IN JULY 1940...

WELL, THAT'S THE LAST WE'LL SEE OF THE OLD TUB, TOM!

YES... UNLESS THEY SEND YOU BACK TO COMMAND HER, LARRY BOY!



TOGETHER, LARRY AND TOM SET OUT ON THE EVENTFUL JOURNEY WHICH MIGHT LEAD... IF THE ROYAL NAVY FOUND THEM WORTHY... TO THE PROUDEST COMMISSION IN THE ROYAL NAVY.

OFFICER TRAINEES MEADOWS AND WILLIS REPORTING, MASTER!



TAKE YOUR KIT TO THE MAIN OFFICE!

## Chapter 3. INITIATIVE TEST

SO, THE TWO OFFICER CADETS JOINED *H.M.S. KING ALFRED*, THE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT AT HOVE. FIRED BY HIS RESTLESS AMBITION, LARRY WILLIS MADE ANOTHER FIERCE RESOLUTION.

THIS IS A TOUGH COURSE, MEN, BUT IF YOU SURVIVE IT, YOU'LL BE OFFICERS IN THE ROYAL NAVY.

I'LL SURVIVE IT... AND BE THE BEST MAN ON THE COURSE!



THE FIRST WEEKS OF THE COURSE WERE A TRIUMPH FOR THE YOUNG SEAMAN WHO HAD SWORN TO WIN PROMOTION FROM THE LOWER DECK. EVERYTHING CAME EASILY TO HIM.

COME ON, MEADOWS!  
WILLIS FOUND IT  
SIMPLE ENOUGH!



ALERT AND INTELLIGENT, LARRY WILLIS ROMPED THROUGH THE TESTING COURSE WHICH TOM MEADOWS AND THE OTHERS FOUND SO DIFFICULT...



TOM AND THE OTHERS ACCEPTED LARRY'S SUPERIORITY, AS THE RECRUITS HAD DONE DURING THE CLEVER YOUNG SEAMAN'S INITIAL TRAINING, WITH GOOD-HUMOURED RESIGNATION.





THE CADETS LINED UP ON THE PARADE GROUND.

YOU'RE TO IMAGINE THAT THIS COAST IS IN ENEMY HANDS! YOU ARE COMMANDOS WHO HAVE LANDED FOR A RAID! A MOTOR LAUNCH IS WAITING TO TAKE YOU OFF AT THE FOOT OF THE CLIFFS EAST OF BRIGHTON! MEADOWS, YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF THE PARTY!



THE EXERCISE WAS DESIGNED TO TEST THE TRAINEES' REACTION TO MODERN WARFARE AND THE DEMANDS IT MADE ON A MAN'S CHARACTER. AS USUAL, LARRY WAS CONFIDENT.



THE M.L. IS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE! THE TRUCK'S DROPPING US ON THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS AND WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE LAUNCH AGAINST THE STOP WATCH BY OUR OWN ROUTE!

IT'S A PIECE OF CAKE!

## Full Steam



TOM MEADOWS FOLLOWED. BUT THERE WAS A LIMIT TO THE FOLLOWING TOM WOULD DO... AND AS LEADER OF THE PARTY HE HAD REACHED THAT LIMIT NOW.



CONFIDENT IN HIS OWN SKILL AND JUDGEMENT, LARRY WATCHED THE CADETS MOVE OFF AFTER TOM. THE OLD FIERCE COMBATIVENESS IN HIS NATURE FORBADE HIM TO FOLLOW.

DON'T BE A FOOL, LARRY!  
COME ON!

IF THEY WON'T COME WITH ME,  
I'LL DO IT ALONE! AND I'LL  
BEAT THEM TO THE M.L., TOO!

WITH A DEEP BREATH, LARRY LOWERED HIMSELF OVER THE EDGE. THE WIND CUFFED HIM AS HE BEGAN THAT PERILOUS DESCENT. THE SHARP CHALK TORE HIS HANDS. HE GRITTED HIS TEETH AND CLIMBED ON...

THIS WAS THE WAY  
LARRY WILLIS  
LIKED TO BE...  
ON HIS OWN!

MADE IT!

LARRY'S NERVES WERE LIKE STEEL AND HIS IRON SELF-CONFIDENCE TOOK HIM SAFELY DOWN THAT FORMIDABLE CLIFF OF GLARING CHALK. JUBILANTLY, HE SET OFF ALONG THE BEACH.



THE REST OF THE TRAINEES WERE STILL TRAILING ALONG. THE TOP OF THE CLIFF, LOOKING FOR A SAFE DESCENT WHEN LARRY APPROACHED THE WAITING OFFICERS. HE FELT A SWEET SENSE OF TRIUMPH.





THE COMMANDER'S FIRST QUESTION WAS A TACIT ADMISSION THAT LARRY HAD WON HANDS DOWN. LARRY FELT THAT HE COULD NOT KEEP THE NOTE OF TRIUMPH OUT OF HIS VOICE.

I CAME STRAIGHT DOWN THE CLIFF, SIR! THEY WENT ON TO FIND A SAFER WAY DOWN!



THOUGH THE OFFICERS MADE NO COMMENT, LARRY KNEW THEY HAD DRAWN THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS FROM HIS LONE ESCAPE. THIS EXERCISE OUGHT TO MAKE HIS SELECTION AS AN OFFICER DOUBLY CERTAIN.

MEADOWS WAS IN CHARGE OF THE PARTY, WASN'T HE, WILLIS? I SUPPOSE HE DETACHED YOU TO COME AHEAD OF THE REST!

OH NO, SIR. IT WAS MY OWN IDEA!



HERE COME THE OTHERS, SIR!

THE REST OF THE TRAINEES WERE ALREADY HURRYING TOWARDS THE OFFICERS. LARRY HAD NOT BEATEN THEM BY A VERY BIG MARGIN... BUT HE HAD BEATEN THEM!

REPORTING, SIR!



GOOD WORK, MEN! WE'VE LEARNT A LOT FROM THIS LITTLE EXERCISE!

THE YOUNG SEAMAN'S TRIUMPH LASTED WHILE THE CADETS CLIMBED THE CLIFF PATH AND PACKED INTO THE TRUCK. EVEN TOM'S SERIOUSNESS COULD NOT DAMP IT.



WITH SUPREME CONFIDENCE, ORDINARY SEAMAN LARRY WILLIS WAITED FOR THE ADMIRALTY SELECTION BOARD WHICH WOULD FORMALLY COMMISSION HIM AN OFFICER IN HIS MAJESTY'S NAVY.



TOM'S JUBILATION WAS ONLY A PRELIMINARY TO LARRY'S OWN TRIUMPH. HIS THROAT DRY WITH HAPPY ANTICIPATION, THE YOUNG CADET ENTERED THE SELECTION BOARD ROOM.

SO THAT'S YOUR VERSION OF THE EXERCISE LAST WEEK IS IT, WILLIS?



YES, SIR! IT DIDN'T TAKE THE OTHERS MUCH LONGER, SIR, BUT I GOT THERE FIRST!

MOST OF THE CAPTAIN'S QUESTIONS WERE ABOUT THE EXERCISE ON THE CLIFFS A WEEK BEFORE. LARRY KNEW THAT THE INITIATIVE HE HAD SHOWN THEN WOULD CLINCH HIS SELECTION. CONFIDENTLY HE AWAITED THE SENIOR OFFICER'S WORDS.

WELL, WE'VE HEARD WILLIS, GENTLEMEN! I TAKE IT WE'RE ALL AGREED?





FOR A SHARP INSTANT, THE CAPTAIN'S WORDS MEANT NOTHING TO LARRY. THEN THEIR ACID MEANING BIT VICIOUSLY THROUGH HIS BRAIN...

BUT, SIR... YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! WHY... WHY?

DON'T TAKE THIS TOO HARD, WILLIS. YOU CAN STILL MAKE A VITAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE NAVY'S TEAM EFFORT... BUT AS A SEAMAN AND NOT AS AN OFFICER! THAT WILL BE ALL!



SHATTERED AND BEWILDERED, THE YOUNG SEAMAN STUMBLED OUT INTO THE CORRIDOR, TO FACE HIS FELLOW CADETS.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, LARRY BOY?

THEY'VE DIPPED ME! BUT WHY, THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO KNOW, WHY?





THE SYMPATHY IN TOM'S VOICE WAS TOO MUCH FOR LARRY. THE SHARP DISAPPOINTMENT IN HIS HEART BURST OUT IN A BITTER AND VICIOUS RESENTMENT.

NO, I DON'T. YOU MAY BE AN OFFICER, BUT YOU NEEDN'T START GIVING ME PI-JAWS LIKE THE REST! WHAT THE HECK DO YOU HAVE TO DO TO GET A COMMISSION IN THIS OUTFIT, ANYWAY? ACT LIKE A DOZY CLOT?

LARRY,  
DO YOU REALLY  
WANT MY  
ADVICE?



AN HOUR LATER, THE FIRST ACHING PAIN HAD PASSED. QUIET AND BEATEN, THE YOUNG SEAMAN SAT ALONE BY THE SEA. IT WAS THERE THAT TOM FOUND HIM...

LARRY BOY...

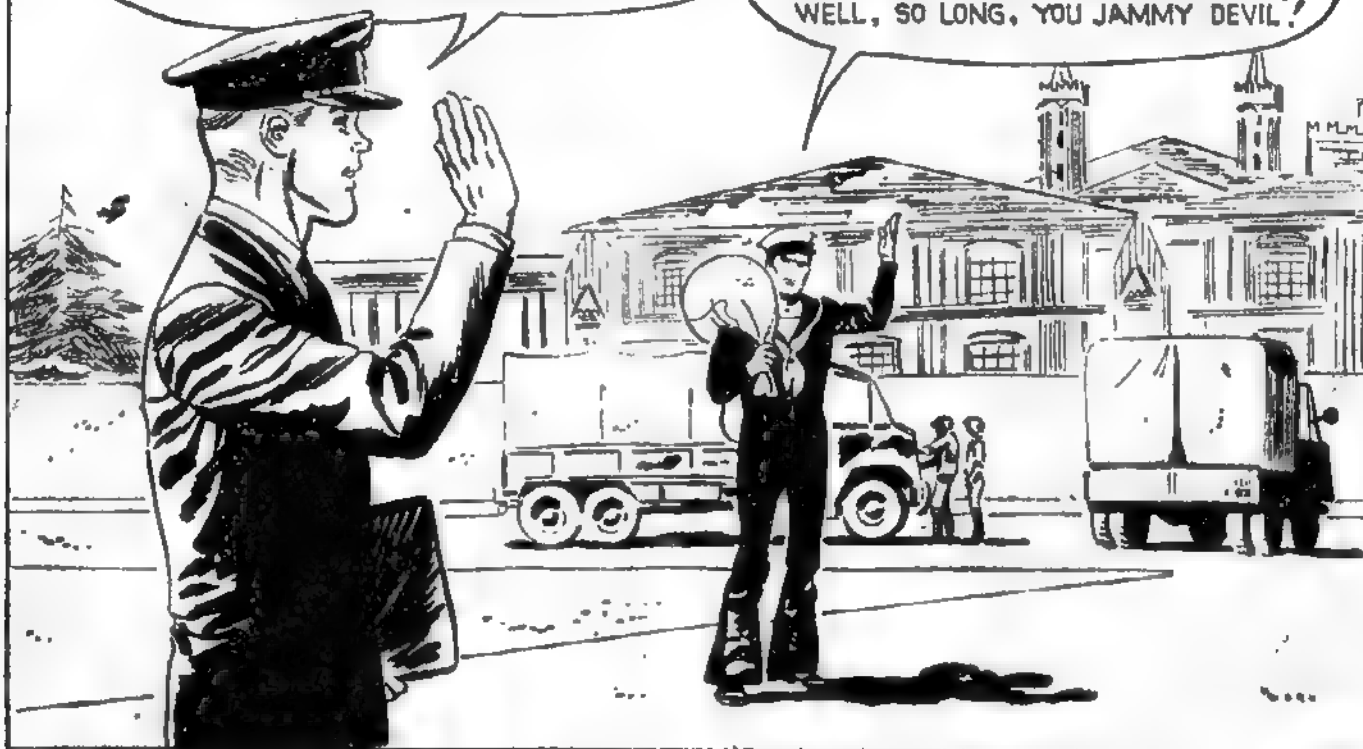
I'M SORRY, TOM. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LOST MY RAG LIKE THAT! I'LL GET OVER IT, I SUPPOSE, EVEN THOUGH I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND IT!



DURING THE NEXT TWO DAYS, LARRY WILLIS BECAME SULLEN AND MOROSE. WHEN HIS ORDERS CAME THROUGH TO PROCEED TO CHATHAM, HE OBEYED SULLENLY.

THEY'VE POSTED ME TO A BATTLE-WAGON,  
LARRY! THE *HIMALAYA*! I'M JOINING  
HER AT POMPEY TOMORROW!

AND THEY'RE SENDING ME BACK TO  
THE POOL AT CHATHAM. I COULDN'T  
CARE LESS WHERE THEY POST ME!  
WELL, SO LONG, YOU JAMMY DEVIL!



HE HAD TRIED HIS HARDEST AND THE NAVY HAD REJECTED HIM. WHY HE HAD FAILED AND THE EASY-GOING TOM MEADOWS HAD SUCCEEDED, HE STILL COULD NOT GUESS. BUT FROM NOW ON...

I'VE BEEN A DARNED FOOL!  
WELL, THEY DON'T GET ANY  
EFFORT OUT OF ME IN  
FUTURE!



## Chapter 4. ACTION STATION

LARRY HAD BEEN IN BARRACKS FOR TWO GLOOMY WEEKS BEFORE HIS POSTING CAME THROUGH. FOUR MONTHS AGO, THAT POSTING WOULD HAVE THRILLED HIM.



NOW HE WENT SULLENLY TO THE DUTY OFFICE TO GET HIS ORDERS. LISTENING TO THE OFFICER'S CURT VOICE, HE FELT RESENTFULLY ALONE IN THE SERVICE WHICH HAD SPURRED HIM ON AND THEN TURNED ITS BACK ON HIM.

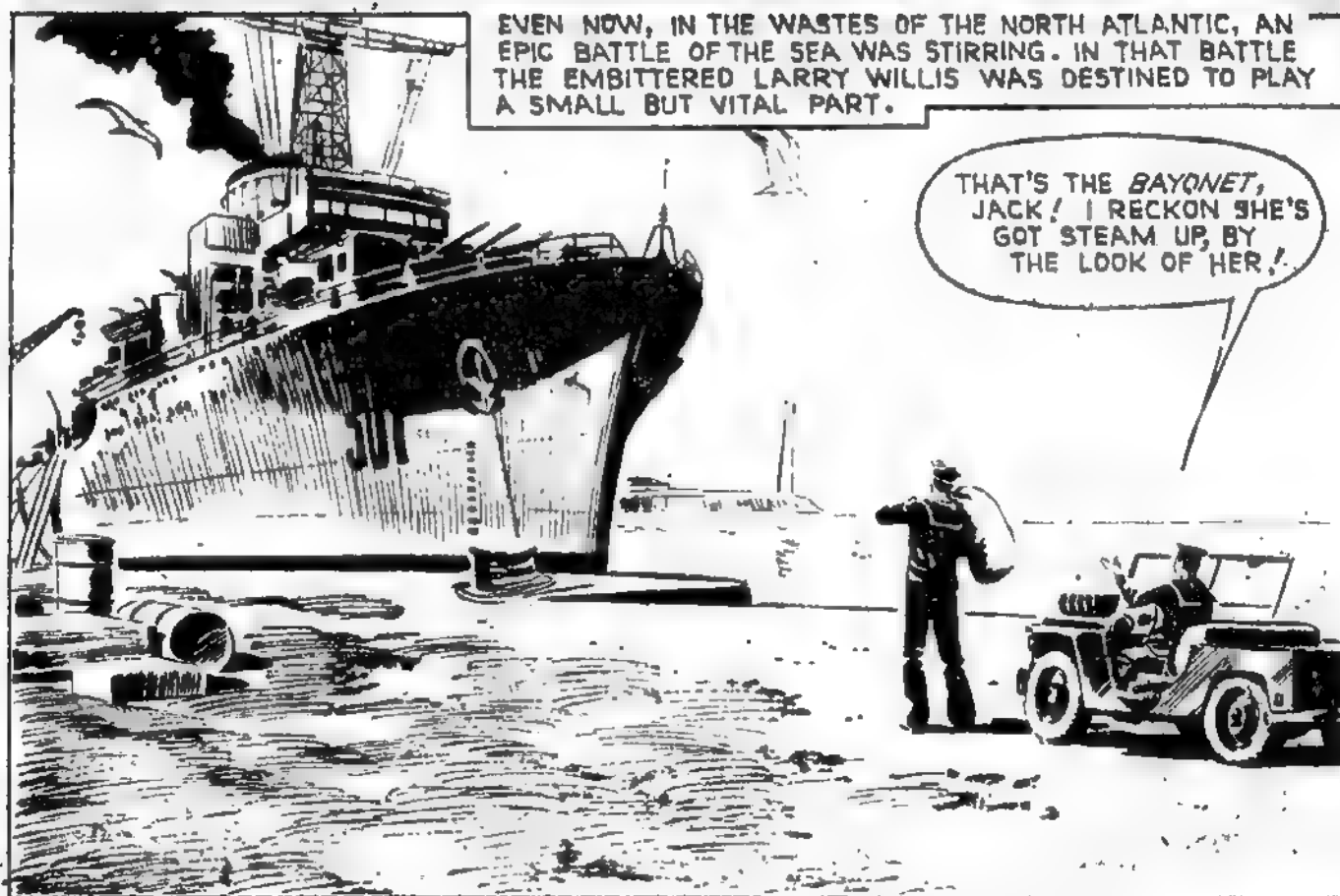


BUT LARRY WILLIS WAS NOT ALONE. EVEN AS HE TRAVELLED ACROSS THE DARK FACE OF BLACKED-OUT LONDON, OTHER UNITS OF THAT GREAT ARMY OF MEN WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY IN ITS HOUR OF NEED WERE TRAVELLING WITH HIM, THOUGH ON DIFFERENT PATHS.



EVEN NOW, IN THE WASTES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC, AN EPIC BATTLE OF THE SEA WAS STIRRING. IN THAT BATTLE THE EMBITTERED LARRY WILLIS WAS DESTINED TO PLAY A SMALL BUT VITAL PART.

THAT'S THE *BAYONET*, JACK! I RECKON SHE'S GOT STEAM UP, BY THE LOOK OF HER!





BUT OF THE FUTURE LARRY HAD NO INKLING AS HE RATHER BELLIGERENTLY BOARDED HIS NEW SHIP AT GREENOCK ON THAT SPRING EVENING IN 1941.

WILLIS IS THE NAME!

COME TO JOIN THE HAPPY PARTY, HAVE YOU, WILLIS? HERE, NOBBY, GIVE HIM A HAND TO THE MESS!



H.M.S. BAYONET WAS ONE OF THE FLEET'S NEWEST DESTROYERS. EVEN LARRY, DETERMINED AS HE WAS TO TAKE NO INTEREST IN HIS NAVAL SURROUNDINGS, WAS UNWILLINGLY IMPRESSED BY HER KEEN LINES.

BETTER SECURE THAT KIT BAG, MATE! THE BAYONET BUCKS SOMETHING AWFUL IN THE SORT OF SEA WE'RE GOING TO SHIP TONIGHT! TOO MUCH TOP-HAMPER!

WE'RE SAILING TONIGHT, ARE WE?



THE POWERFUL TURBINES IN THE STEEL BOWELS OF THE SHIP WERE ALREADY THROBBING AS LARRY FOLLOWED NOBBY ON DECK. AND THERE THE TOUGH BUT KINDLY SAILOR BARLOW, PASSED ON A MOMENTOUS BUZZ.



IN THE CONTROLLED BUSTLE OF MAKING READY FOR SEA, LARRY WILLIS ALMOST FORGOT HIS BITTERNESS. ONLY WHEN THE *BAYONET* WAS UNDERWAY, HE REMEMBERED SAILOR'S WORDS... AND HIS OWN GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE NAVY.



EVEN IF THESE FIVE SLEEK WARSHIPS OF THE NINTH DESTROYER FLOTILLA WERE HEADING OUT TO ATTACK A LEVIATHAN OPPONENT, WAS IT LIKELY THAT ORDINARY SEAMAN WILLIS WOULD TAKE ANY VITAL PART IN THE BATTLE. THAT WAS LARRY'S BITTER THOUGHT AS HE STOOD BY THE RAIL.




BUT LARRY MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT DIFFERENTLY IF HE COULD HAVE SEEN THE OPERATIONS ROOM AT NAVAL HEADQUARTERS AT THAT MOMENT. THERE, MANY SCATTERED THREADS, INSIGNIFICANT IN THEMSELVES, WERE BEING DRAWN TOGETHER TO ENMESH THE PRIDE OF HITLER'S NAVY.

NINTH DESTROYER FLOTILLA LEFT GREENOCK FIVE MINUTES AGO, SIR!

IF THE *LUDENDORF* HOLDS HER PRESENT COURSE, THEY SHOULD CLOSE WITH HER IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS! LET'S HOPE THE *KESTREL*'S AIRCRAFT KEEP CONTACT WITH HER!




## Full Steam



THE *LUDENDORF* WAS GERMANY'S BIGGEST BATTLESHIP. CLAIMED AS UNSINKABLE, SHE CARRIED A MAIN ARMAMENT OF EIGHT 15-INCH GUNS. FOUR DAYS AGO, SHE HAD SLIPPED OUT INTO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TO PLUNDER THE ALLIED CONVOYS.



EVER SINCE SHE HAD LEFT HER NORWEGIAN HIDEOUT, THE ROYAL NAVY HAD TRACKED THE *LUDENDORF*'S COURSE AND MARSHALLED ITS FORCES. AT DAWN THAT MORNING, A STRIKE OF FLEET AIR ARM SWORDFISH FROM *H.M.S. KESTREL* HAD FLOWN IN TO THE ATTACK.

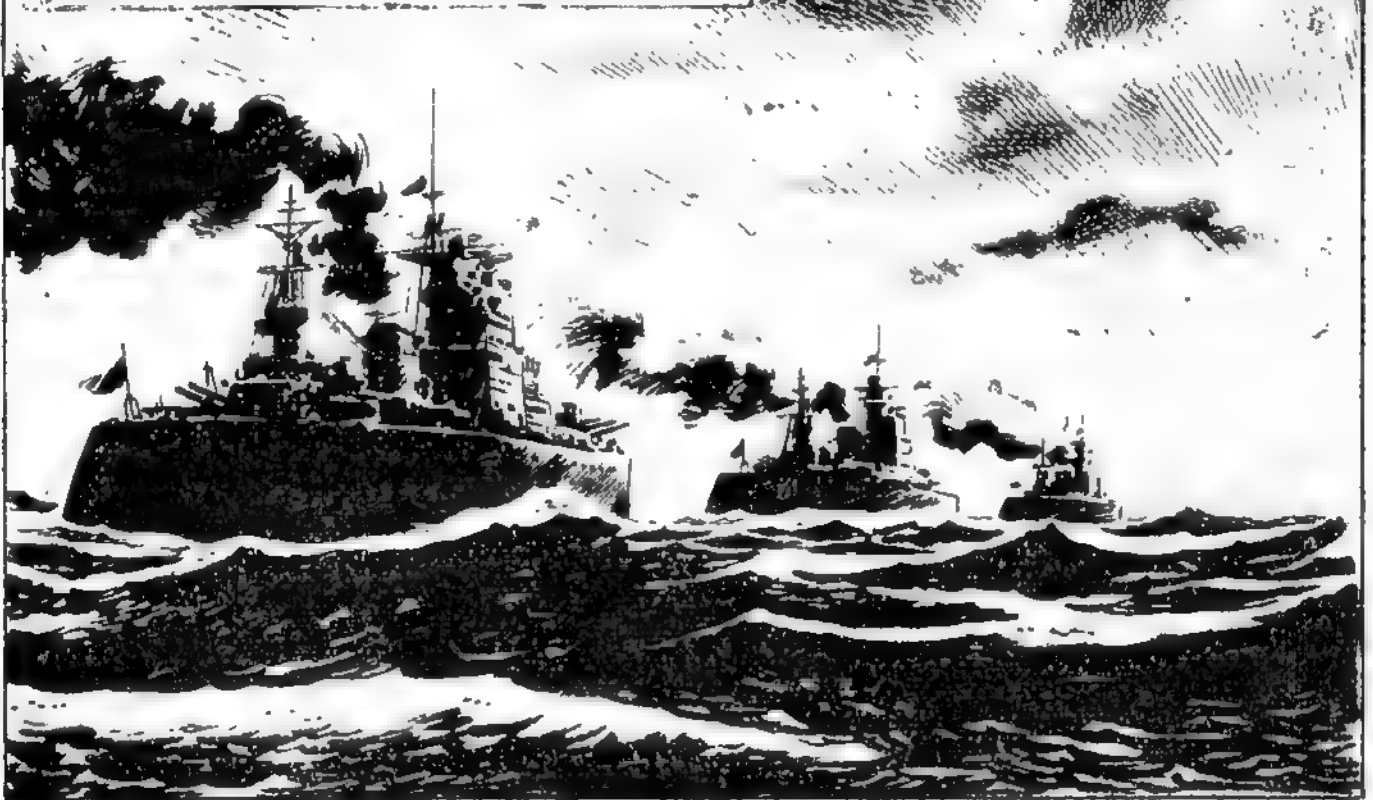


RADIO *KESTREL*, SAMMY!  
*LUDENDORF* IS HOLDING HER  
COURSE BUT HAS REDUCED  
SPEED. THE BOYS MUST  
HAVE WINGED HER WITH  
THAT LAST FISH!

ROYAL NAVY



THE *LUDENDORF* HAD BEEN SLOWED BUT NOT STOPPED. FROM THE SOUTH, THREE BATTLESHIPS PLOUGHED THROUGH THE MIST AT THIRTY KNOTS, BUT IT WOULD BE HOURS BEFORE THEY GOT NEAR ENOUGH TO HIT THE GERMAN RAIDER EVEN AT EXTREME RANGE.



THE NINTH DESTROYER FLOTILLA HAD BEEN ORDERED TO STOP THE *LUDENDORF* WITH TORPEDOES SO THAT THE BATTLESHIPS COULD CATCH THEIR PREY AND FINISH HER WITH THEIR GREAT GUNS. THE FIVE SLEEK DESTROYERS, INCLUDING *H.M.S. BAYONET*, WERE CLOSING FAST.



THIS WAS A GIGANTIC TEAM EFFORT BY A WHOLE FLEET... BUT BELOW DECKS ON THE *BAYONET*, AN ANGRY YOUNG ORDINARY SEAMAN WAS STILL GETTING THE LONELY PRIDE AND BITTERNESS OUT OF HIS SOUL.



I'LL BET I CAN DO ANYTHING AN OFFICER CAN DO - AND BETTER!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, WILLIS? GET DIPPED FOR A COMMISSION?

SAILOR BARLOW'S SHOT IN THE DARK HAD GONE HOME. LARRY WILLIS WAS MOMENTARILY ASHAMED. BUT THE BITTERNESS REMAINED.



WELL, NEVER MIND, WILLIS! EVERY MAN TO HIS JOB ON SHIPBOARD, I SAY.

IF HE'S GOT A JOB!

SPARKS HAS JUST PICKED UP A SIGHTING REPORT FROM THE *SABRE*, MATES!

THE FLOTILLA LEADER *SABRE* HAD SIGHTED THE GREAT MENACING BULK OF THE ENEMY POCKET BATTLESHIP TWO MILES AHEAD IN THE THIN NORTHERN MIST. ALARM BELLS SHRILLED BELOW THE *BAYONET*'S DECKS.



WITH THE OTHERS, LARRY WILLIS RAN HEADLONG TO THE DECK. BUT THERE, AS THE VETERAN KILICK SENT HIM TO HIS ACTION STATION, A GUST OF ANGER CHOKED THE YOUNG SEAMAN'S THROAT.



IN THAT EXHILARATING MOMENT, AS THE GUNS THUNDERED OUT ALONG THE SHAKING DECK OF THE DESTROYER, LARRY WILLIS, STOOD IDLY BY THE 'LIFEBOAT MECHANISM' AND RAGED WITH BITTERNESS.

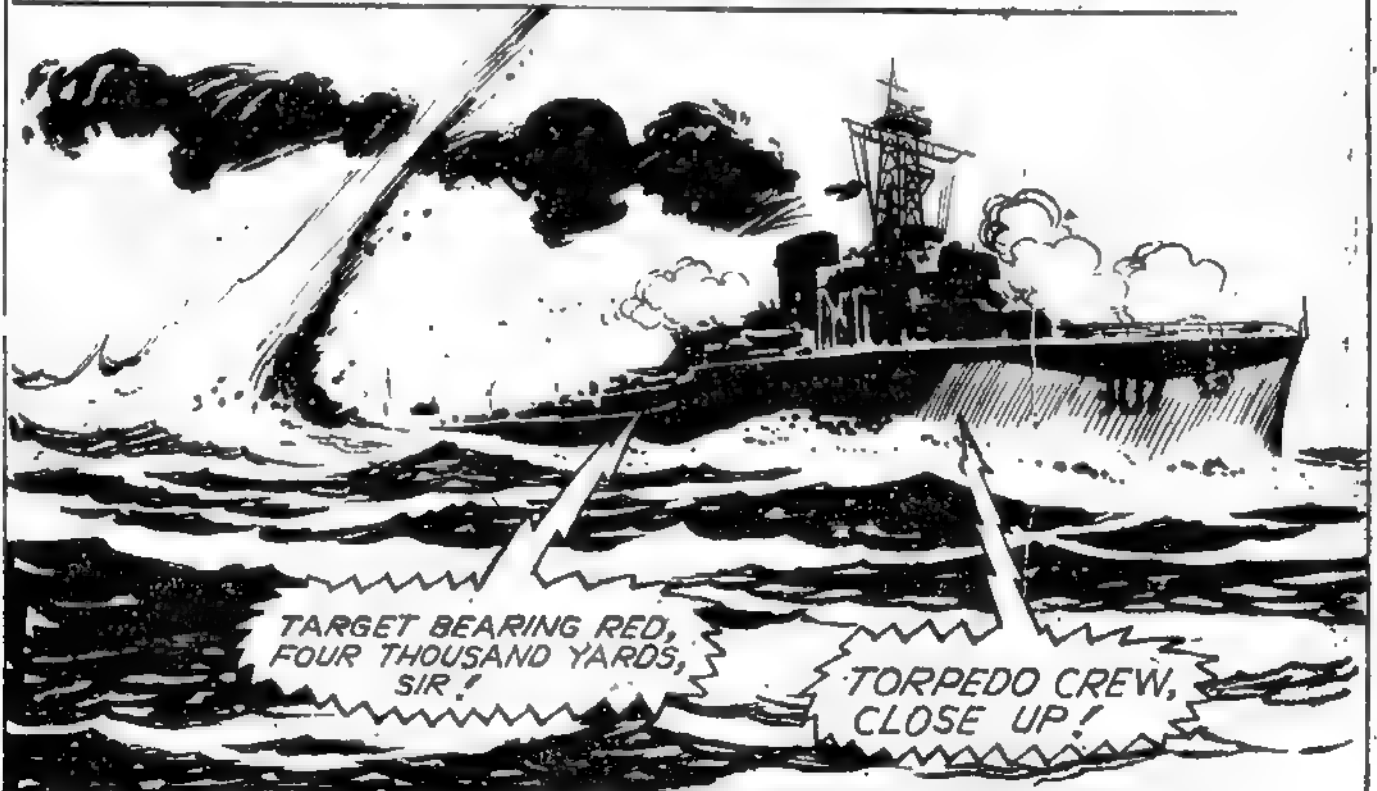




THE FLOTILLA COMMANDER HAD ORDERED THE DESTROYERS TO MAKE THEIR ATTACKS SIMULTANEOUSLY AND FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. HIS PLAN WAS TO DIVIDE THE GERMAN BATTLESHIP'S HEAVY ARMAMENT AND SO LESSEN THE HAVOC IT COULD PLAY ON ITS SMALL ADVERSARIES.



AS THE RANGE CLOSED, THE *LUDENDORF*'S HEAVY SHELLS POUNDED INTO THE SEA NEAR THE *BAYONET*. TORTURED AND CORDITE-STINKING FOAM LASHED THE DESTROYER'S DECKS. STILL SHE HELD HER COURSE.



THE *BAYONET* LUNGED BROADSIDE ON TO HER GIANT FOE. A COOL COMMAND FROM THE BRIDGE LAUNCHED THE TORPEDOES FROM THEIR TWIN TUBES AT THE *LUDENDORF*. TENSE WITH FRUSTRATION, LARRY WATCHED THEIR ARROWING TRACKS.



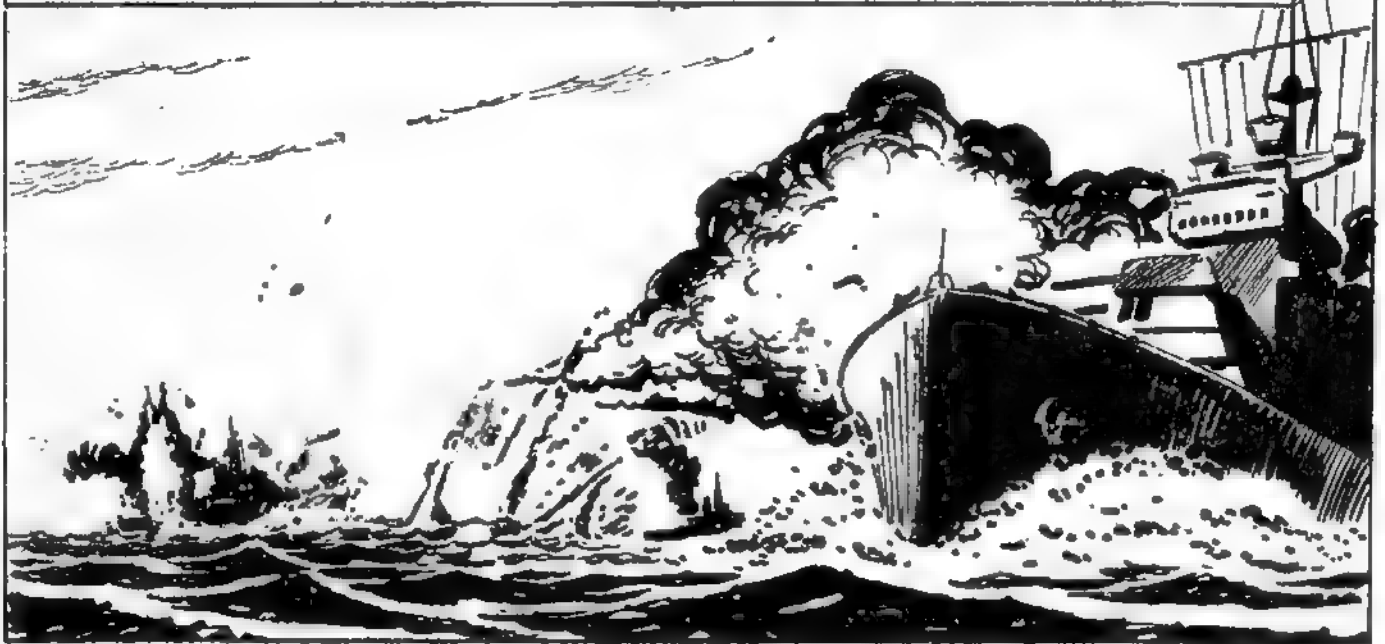
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ON SALE MONDAY 1st FEBRUARY

EVEN AS THE SLIM TORPEDOES SNAKED ACROSS THAT COLD GREY FOUR THOUSAND YARD GAP, THE *LUDENDORF*'S HEAVY GUNS TURNED BRUTALLY ON THE *BAYOVET*.



THE FIFTEEN-INCH SALVO BRACKETED THE BRITISH DESTROYER. ONE SHELL SLAMMED HOME VICIOUSLY ON THE UPPER DECK AMIDSHIPS. STUNNED BY THE BLAST, LARRY LOOKED UP AT THE OERLIKON PLATFORM AND GASPED.



BUT IN THAT SPLIT SECOND, BITTERNESS ARRESTED THE YOUNG SEAMAN. WHY SHOULD HE SHOW THEM WHAT HE COULD DO? HE HAD ALREADY SHOWN THEM ONCE, AND THE NAVY HAD TURNED HIM DOWN.

NO! THEY GAVE ME MY STUPID ACTION STATION... LET THEM FIRE THEIR OWN GUNS!

RELIEF OERLIKON CREW... AT THE DOUBLE!

ONE OF THE *BAYONET'S* TWO TORPEDOES SLID USELESSLY UNDER THE STERN OF THE MIGHTY BATTLESHIP, BUT THE OTHER RAN STRAIGHT AND TRUE. THE SHOCK OF THE EXPLOSION RIPPLED ALONG THE MASSIVE STEEL DECKS.

THE BRITISH PIGS HAVE HIT US! ALL GUNS BEAR! BLOW THAT SHIP OUT OF THE WATER!



IN THE DEADLY RETALIATION, THE GREAT GUNS SWEEP ROUND AND FIXED ON THE PUNY DESTROYER. A BROADSIDE OF HEAVY SHELLS PLUMMETED ACROSS THE NARROW GAP BETWEEN THE TWO SHIPS.



THE SHATTERING SALVO ALMOST BLEW THE *BAYONET* OUT OF THE WATER. ON THE BRIDGE, CRAZILY TILTED AS THE SEA POURED INTO THE SHIP'S BROKEN HULL, THE CAPTAIN HAD ONLY ONE SLENDER HOPE LEFT... TO SAVE HIS CREW.

LOWER THE BOATS,  
PORT SIDE!

THERE'S NOT A HOPE, SIR!  
THE PORT RAIL WILL BE UNDER  
WATER IN TWENTY SECONDS!



ONE MAN OUT OF A WHOLE SHIP'S COMPANY WAS NOW THE VITAL LINK, AND THAT ONE MAN WAS READY AT HIS POST. ALMOST BEFORE THE ORDER HAD BLARED OUT FROM THE TANNØY HE HAD LEAPED INTO ACTION.

LOWER THE BOATS,  
PORT SIDE!

AYE AYE,  
SIR!

ONLY LARRY WILLIS' QUICK REACTION GOT THE LIFEBOATS AWAY BEFORE THE STRICKEN *BAYONET* HEeled OVER. AS HE REACHED THE FALLS, SAILOR BARLOW FLUNG THE YOUNG SEAMAN A GRATEFUL WORD.

ABANDON  
SHIP!

SMART WORK, YOUNGSTER!  
NOW DO YOU SEE THAT EVERY  
JOB MEANS SOMETHING?

LARRY WILLIS HAD NO TIME TO THINK AS THE 'ORDER TO ABANDON SHIP' TOOK HIM OVER THE STEEPLY TILTED SIDE. BUT AS THE LIFEBOAT FLOATED CLEAR...



## Full Steain



THE YOUNG SEAMAN REMEMBERED ALSO THE WORDS OF THE COMMANDER ON THE DAY HE HAD JOINED THE NAVY: "THE SUCCESS OF THE ROYAL NAVY DEPENDS ON EVERY ONE OF YOU! REMEMBER THAT, WHATEVER THE NAVY ASKS OF YOU!"





IT WAS NOT TOO LATE FOR LARRY WILLIS TO LEARN THE TRUTH OF THE COMMANDER'S WORDS. THE TOUGH SAILOR BARLOW HAD POINTED THE WAY AHEAD AND ALREADY AN UNEXPECTED CHANCE TO LAY THE MISGUIDED PAST WAS AT HAND.



THE THREE GREAT BATTLESHIPS HAD OVERHAULED THE *LUDENDORF*, CRIPPLED BY THE *BAYONET*'S TORPEDO. AS THE PINNACE WITH THE DESTROYER'S SURVIVORS RETURNED TO ITS SHIP, LARRY LOOKED UP...



THE SIGHT OF THE SHIP'S NAME BROUGHT SHARPLY BACK TO LARRY WILLIS HIS LAST BITTER DAY AT THE *KING ALFRED*. AND WHEN HE REACHED THE *HIMALAYA*'S DECK...

BY ALL THAT'S WONDERFUL ... LARRY BOY!



THERE, UNDER THE UNFAMILIAR PEAKED CAP OF A JUNIOR OFFICER, WAS THE FAMILIAR FACE OF TOM MEADOWS. NOW AT LAST, LARRY WILLIS REALISED WHY HE HAD FAILED TO MAKE THE GRADE AS AN OFFICER.

I KNOW WHY THEY DIPPED ME NOW, TOM! I WANTED TO BEAT YOU ALL, INSTEAD OF WORKING WITH YOU TO BEAT THE JERRIES!

I KNEW ALL THE TIME, LARRY BOY, BUT I COULDN'T TELL YOU, AND WHAT NOW?



THAT WAS OVER AND DONE WITH NOW. THE VITAL DUTY OF AN ABLE SEAMAN WOULD BE ENOUGH FOR LARRY WILLIS IN THE FUTURE. HE HAD JUST ONE REQUEST TO MAKE OF SUB-LIEUTENANT MEADOWS.

NOW I WANT YOU TO DO ME A FAVOUR, SUB-LIEUTENANT! LET ME HAVE A CRACK AT THAT JERRY RAIDER... AS ONE OF YOUR TEAM!

CAN DO, LARRY! YOU ALWAYS WERE A BALL OF FIRE!

THE BRITISH BATTLESHIPS HAD CLOSED WITH THEIR CRIPPLED BUT STILL MENACING ENEMY. AT LONG RANGE, THE BIG GUNS OF THE FLEET FINISHED OFF THE WORK A TEAM OF AIRCRAFT AND DESTROYERS AND RADAR TRACKING STATIONS HAD BEGUN.



AND BELOW THE HIMALAYA'S DECKS, A TEAM OF MEN FED THE MIGHTY GUNS ...  
A TEAM OF WHICH EVERY MAN WAS A VITAL PART AND ONE MAN  
PROUDLY KNEW IT.



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